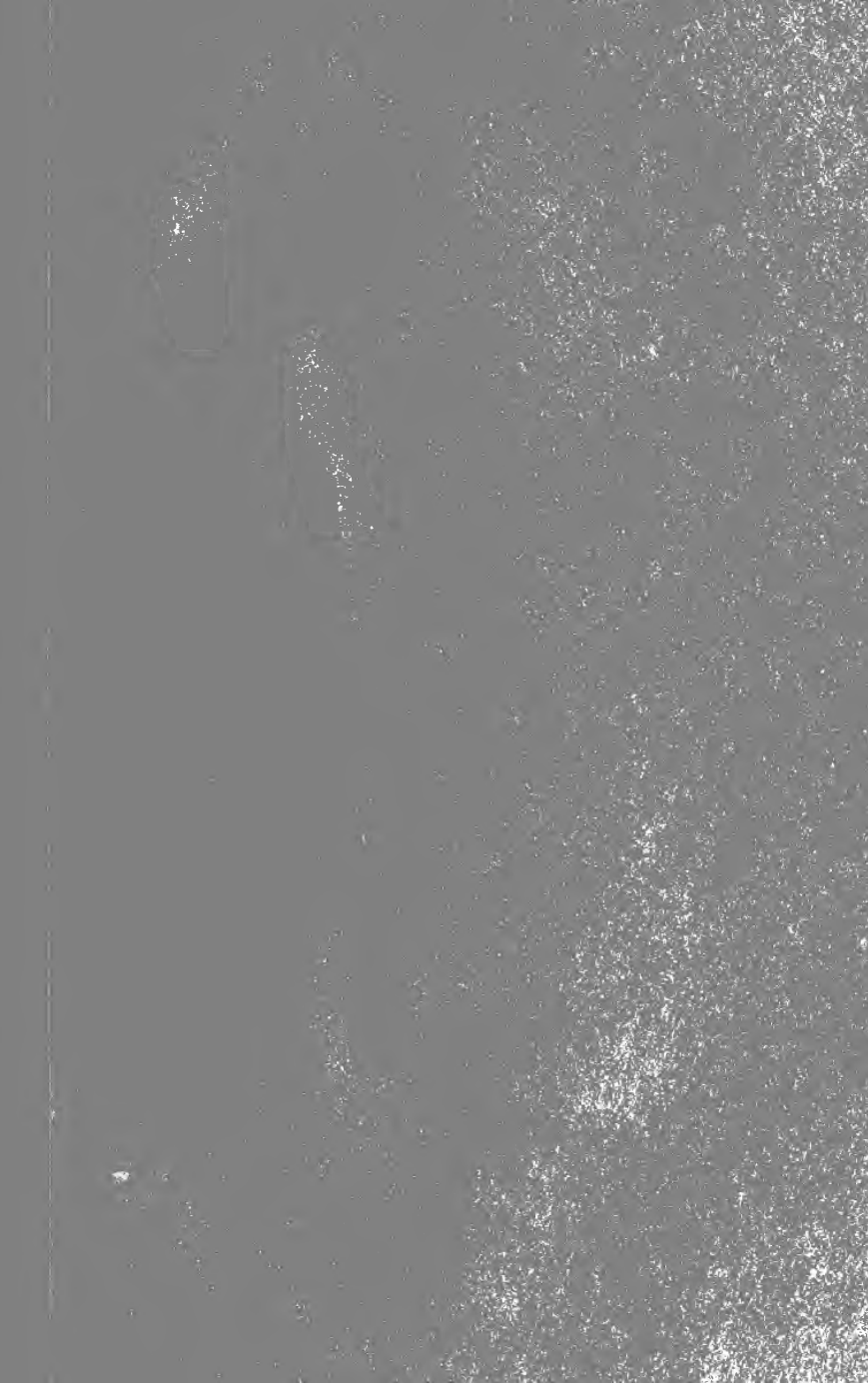


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HE IS A CANADIAN

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BY
ESTHER KERRY

HE IS A CANADIAN AND OTHER VERSE

—— BY ——
ESTHER KERRY
“

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He is a Canadian, London Lamps, The Spirits of the Lake (1) and The Return of the 13th and 14th have appeared in the Gazette; A Canadian Spring Song in the Canadian Bookman. For permission to reprint them, acknowledgment is due to the Editors.

HE IS A CANADIAN

"He is a Canadian"—I wonder has he stood
In some thick forest, on a mountain slope
Silent beneath a pine
And looking out across a valley seen,
Nothing but bristling tree trunks far below
And stony-scarred grey mountains
Whose snow-caps
Rise to a sunswept blue?

"He is a Canadian"—I wonder has he stood
On some still morning by a tiny lake
And watched the water ripple on the beach
One little clearing
In the mighty woods.
And known he is first to breathe that air
Not weighted by a thousand lives and thoughts,
But rare and pure,
A breathing straight from God?

"He is a Canadian"—Then I know he knows
The keenness of our winter's icy blast,
The radiant snow, the shining blue, the frost,
That bites and purifies,
And clears away
The murk and greyness of too sordid lives,
He is a Canadian, and he shares with me,
Those vast free spaces and those open ways
And memories now half bitter, for they were so
sweet
Of careless eager life, and happier days.

Oh, Canada, of bigness, beauty, strength,
Whom we thy wandering children know as ne'er
before,

In exiles' retrospect of glorious hours,
We love thee with a love, we never felt till now—
A love not all our own, a heritage,
From those who to thy shores no more return
Their love of thee, unconscious, pent,
Which drove them forth, they knew not why
And urged them on,
All glad for thee to die,
In this great love may we be consecrate
And made a nation new,
Strong as thy mountains,
Generous as thy plains,
Pure as thy winters
And with depths unknown,
As all thy forest lakes
Still pools of peace.

London, June, 1917.

IN ENGLAND

In England, in England
We're living now in England,
We've frozen in the winter 'neath a bitter leaden sky,
In December fogged and dreary
Through sunless January
And February frostbound,
To March's lengthening days,
Till April whirled upon us
Biting snow and rain in torrents,
And the only wisp of brightness
Was the crocus' golden blaze.

In London, in London
We've lived long months in London,
Grey London, dear London, we know it now so well;
Its ancient ways a-winding
New paths forever finding,
Quiet alleys half forgotten
Wide streets fair and fine,
Grey barges on the river,
Red flame of winter's sunset,
And daffodils up-springing
Beside the Serpentine.

In Surrey, in Surrey
Now spring has come to Surrey,
The cuckoo's calling always in a tiny bit of wood,
Where bluebells shine and shimmer
Pale primroses gleam dimmer,
And new leaves quiver glistening
As the rays of sunlight pass.
A world fresh-washed in greenness
A wind bereft of keenness,
But blowing to us sweetly
New odours of the grass.

In England, in England,
We're living now in England,
We've crossed the seas to England, where our
fathers used to dwell;
Oh, days of heart-sick sadness,
Oh, days of home-sick madness,
So far away our own land
Beyond the ocean foam;
But now on still spring evenings,
The voices of those fathers
Drift whispering around us
And we know that we've come home.

“LONDON LAMPS”

*“London must spill out lives like wine, that London’s lights
may shine.”*

A myriad lamps of London
Are dim and shadowed now;
A myriad lads of London
Are fighting in the war.

Oh little lads of London
Who grew ’neath London’s lights,
Whose lives went out in suffering
All black as London’s nights.

As you have passed to glory
And shine as lights beyond;
So London’s lamps shall blaze again
Through life-blood of her sons.

THE BLUES*

In the High Street stands the old clock tower,
Sitting at its base, Britain's blue army,
In the November sun,
White-bandaged, crimson-necktied,
The Scotch Balmoral jaunty set,
The Anzac's lordly spreading brim upturned,
And service caps all worn and proudly badged—
Britain's blue army;
Washed up from battle's tide and suffering sore
To rest awhile in this still English place.

Down the flagged pathway still the stream flows on,
Up the broad High Street, round the old clock tower,
Britain's blue army;
'Tis the great heart of England bared
That gentle heart aforesometimes hid
By offhand sternness, and indifferent mask;
But now all opened for the world to see
Throbs England's heart,
Through street and market place on sunny days
In that great army of her wounded sons.

** The blue hospital uniform, worn by non-commissioned officers and privates.*

HURLEY PLACE

I.—From a back window.

There's an evening hush in the cobbled yard,
The garden stretches quiet and fair,
The grasses grow between the stones,
For few are the footsteps passing there.

The stables are empty, the oast house bare,
The garden all green a wilderness;
A thin new moon looks faintly down,
The rosebuds peep from the high-grown grass.

There's a flash of white in the cobbled yard,
And a blue gown flits through the kitchen door;
For England's women nurse broken lads,
Where life's full tide flowed on before.

HURLEY PLACE

II.—The V.A.D.'s.

Five white aprons
Flitting through the garden,
'Tis the hour of sunset
The day's work is done;
Through the leafy pathways,
Underneath the plane trees,
Gleam the five white aprons,
The day's work is done.

Five blue gowns are
Covering girlish figures,
Who walk a little weary
The day's work was hard;
Swaying down the garden,
Resting on the railed gate,
Looking towards the sunset,
The day's work was hard.

Five pairs of hands
Have wielded broom and duster,
Washed all the dishes,
Scrubbed the pantry floor,
Polished up the silver,
Scoured pots and saucepans,
Opened with anxiety
And closed the oven door.

Five pairs of feet
Crunching on the gravel,
Have run about since morning
Upstairs and down;
In and out the bedrooms,
Waiting on the tables,
From scullery to kitchen,
With cheery pattering sound.

Five white-coiffed heads,
With veils demurely tied in,
Fluttering a little
In the scented evening breeze,
Nod and meet together
And wonder why they do this,
Working as they never worked
In former days of ease.

Five red crosses
Shining in the twilight,
Tell the reason better
Than any words can say;
Service for the helpless,
Drudgery quite selfless,
Then rest in the garden
At the close of day.

HURLEY PLACE

III.—Contrasts.

The officers live at the front of the house,
In drawing room stately, and hall;
The blue girls sit by the kitchen stove,
Or else in the staff room small.

The officers' bedrooms are airy and large,
Their bathrooms are shiny and new;
The blue girls sleep in boxes small,
As the servants used to do.

The officers' walls are rosy and pink,
Or laden with clematis bloom;
The staff must look on a fiery red,
Left from the billiard room.

The officers sit on the terrace wide,
And have butter and jam for their tea;
The nurses put margarine on their bread,
Where butter and jam should be.

The officers go to London town
For a whole long afternoon;
The blue girls out in the garden sit,
Till their two hours' rest is done.

One of the officers loses an 'h,
The M.C.'s a cockney lad;
The blue girls' voices are soft and low,
A surfeit of schools they've had.

Some of the officers sleepless lie
When thunder is rolling at night;
The weary girls never raise their heads
Till six of the morning bright.

But one and the same cause brings them there
Brave men; and girls in blue.
'The girls are giving, the officers gave,
That's how we pull things through.

So officers all, if in future years,
Class walls again must harden;
Think with a smile how you sat on the lawn,
And we walked the kitchen garden.

HURLEY PLACE

IV.—England's Good.

From the front one looks on lawns and gardens,
Stately cedars, a spreading wood,
Long brown fields, a distant spire;
This is our England—and it is good.

Behind, around the ancient farm place,
Cluster the cottages, lowly and gray;
The men who lived there have marched to
 Flanders,
Their children work through the hours for play.

Dear tender women of cottage and mansion,
Men who went gladly as Englishmen should,
Brave little children bearing big burdens;
These are the people who make England good.

MIDSUMMER

A ditch of yellow clover
A field all green and white,
And darker green trees bending
Against an evening light,
A light so palely golden,
A grey cloud in the sky,
An evening hush all clover sweet,
July.

WIND THOUGHTS

Beyond the garden, on the hillside, perch we 'neath
the cedar boughs,
On two shaky wooden benches—cooled and soothed
and half a-drowse.
From our feet the hill falls sharply, and the grasses
bend and blow;
For a wind is swaying round us, wild as thoughts,
which come and go.

Hey for this wind, it has blown for miles,
Fitfully scented, laden with smiles;
Hey for the hillside, a-drift in the breeze,
Ho for the tempest-tossed tops of the trees.

Ho for our perch by the dark cedars quiet,
Branches unmoved in the frolicsome riot,
Mystery-fraught this wind blows to-day
What of the places it passed on the way?

Blowing through cities, o'er woodland and wheat,
On-rushing, burning, odorous, sweet,
Over the hay-fields and dusty roads dry;
Whence is it? What is it? Where is it? Why?

SEPTEMBER

September rings the lake with sudden flame,
Scarlet and gold leap forth upon the hills,
And each day brings a hue more brilliant still,
Till one great mass of vivid glory burns
Twixt blue of sky, and dancing water blue,
And shouts a paeon of thanksgiving wild;
There comes a day, the glowing tints have paled,
A restless wind sweeps rustling through the trees;
Down slip the yellow leaves and gently float,
Gleaming at twilight, on the darkening lake.

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

To climb to the tip of a hill top
On a bright September day,
Breathing an air like chilled wine
Yet loving the sun's warm ray.

And then from the tip of the hill top
The other hills are seen,
Brushed thick with the colours of autumn
And sapphire lakes between.

Perch up on the sunwarmed boulders,
Swept by the breezes chill,
Wrapped round with that perfect contentment
That comes at the top of the hill.

IN THE WOOD

Scuffling the fallen leaves
Swept by the fitful breeze,
Under the sun-flecked trees,
On through the wood.

Sun shining up on high,
Blue the September sky,
Clear is the air and dry
To-day in the wood.

Carpet of leaves below
Red, orange all aglow,
Ferns green and waving grow
Here in the wood.

Down below water gleams
Silvered with bright sunbeams,
Shimmering to smile it seems,
Up through the wood.

See where the trees break wide
Green slopes on every side,
Hills in their autumn pride
Look back at the wood.

Pause at the gate awhile
Resting upon the stile,
Winding for many a mile
The road leaves the wood.

Soon we must leave it too,
Follow that road anew,
Autumn days are too few,
Here in the wood.

A CANADIAN SPRING SONG

What do I miss in this English spring
This tenderest, loveliest time,
When just to live's a miracle
A song in sweetest rhyme?
Gone is the biting winter's grey
Swept away in a night;
Radiantly, softly spring creeps forth
Pale, and green and bright.

What do I miss though the crocus bloom
And daffodils golden shine,
While budding leaves on lacy boughs
Seek the blue sky divine;
The copper beech gleams dusky red,
The grass is emerald foam?—
The sound of the waters flowing free
Down a hundred hills of home.

Murmuring, trickling, heavenly sweet
The hidden streamlets run;
Or dashing down a hillside brown
Their waters mock the sun.
The great still pools hold in their depths
The spring blue of the sky,
And gurgling, bubbling, sparkling gay
Fresh streamlets hurry by.

What do I miss? To walk through the trees
On mountain slopes, and hear
Mid fresh damp smell of earth and buds
The waters singing clear;
Or catch their sound when twilight soft
The woodland spaces fills,
That low ecstatic melody
Of countless running rills.

No sweet-voiced thrush, nor trilling lark
Comes ushering in our spring;
But God gave us a music too
A wondrous, joyous thing;
And when the winter vanishes
Spring's never spring to me
Unless I hear down all the hills
The waters tumbling free.

THE SADNESS OF JUNE

When the lilac blooms have vanished,
The laburnums' splendour failed,
When the chestnut plumes are falling,
And the rosy may has paled;
As the bluebell slowly withers,
The shaded woodlands croon,
Now that May's withdrawn her blossoms,
There's a sadness green in June.

Then the cuckoo calls more faintly,
And the meadow grass grows high,
Then the trees are waving full-leaved,
And the larks sing in the sky.
While the sun makes chequered patterns
Through the rustling leaves at noon;
There is yet a haunting sadness,
The world's too green in June.

Now the graceful elms are waving
By the willows' softer sheen,
And all the tree tops flaunting
Mad-dancing in their green;
But the leaves are whispering, whispering,
And the grasses add their tune,
Till the roses burst in glory
It is always sad in June.

THE ROUND POND

Kensington Gardens.

Little blue water
Mirror of childhood,
White frocks a-flutter,
White sails a-float;
Patter of glad feet
Ringing the edges,
Waves fraught with secrets
For each crossing boat.

Little blue water
Haunt of the aged,
Who come to it slowly
Through wide spreading trees;
Feed the white sea gulls,
Watch the gay children,
And glimpse in the mirror
Their own childhood's peace.

MY TREASURY

I gave my heart to London
In the cold and foggy weather
While buses slid and slithered
Over pavements wet and dark,
In days of damp and drizzle
In days of pearly greyness
I gave my heart to London,
But never knew I had.

I found my heart was London's
When April's leaves were blowing
One day of sparkling sunlight
I rode weary up Park Lane,
For murmuring from the City,
And whispering through the Park trees,
As voices from Westminster,
Great London spoke to me.

I know all kinds of sadness,
I hold them in my bosom;
And laughter of the long years,
Alike they come to me:
My heart is great, enfolding,
I hold your heart within it;
So sink in me your sadness,
And glad again go free.

Now in the damp and drizzle,
Or fiercest heat of summer,
But chiefly when the spring-time
Fills the squares in tender green;
If weary, sad, indifferent,
I rest my heart in London's
And catch her living gladness,
Though miles away I be.

TO A MOTHER

Of all those who in battle fall
Some there are whose passing seems quite final,
Too young, too splendid, they have gone;
Others so live, so close their image still
We cannot think of them as really dead.

God takes all their souls, we never doubt,
And work he finds for some—or rest—
We cannot know; we only trust;
But others for a purpose of His own
I think He leaves a presence on this earth.

In fancy I can see them, spirits bright,
Mounted on strong, winged horses,
Spanning the broad Atlantic's surging swells,
Hurling through vapours, spindrift, foam,
To Canada's green shores, and home.

And so, dear lady,
As each slow word your grandson speaks
I somehow see your boy, his grave slow strength,
And in his little nieces' laughing smiles
I catch his own,
And in their childish movements all untaught
His ready grace of action, word, and thought.
Thus of their strength an essence fine distilled
Is poured all sweet into the veins of those,
They loved, or would have loved in life;
And as they never fathers in the flesh will be
Nor hold their loved ones more in warm embrace,
A spiritual fatherhood is theirs
To all the growing children of the race;
And, though we've lost them, still our destinies they
guide
To keep us firm set in those faiths for which they
died.

Breasting the broad Atlantic still they come,
Those God-sent happy warriors hastening home.

THE RETURN

We're going back in our thousands
To the lands from which we came,
An army of men and women
An army, but not the same—
We carry with us something
We scarce can understand,
Memories to give us forever
Our share in the Motherland,
A spell that is cast in London
Gladly its power we own
Binding us fast in the retrospect
Of places we have known.

Some think of southerly Streatham,
Or Hendon, where aeroplanes sail,
Others of Epsom High Street,
Or Putney and Kingston Vale;
Some love the City's winding streets,
Others the roaring Strand,
To some a church's stillness speaks,
To others a restaurant band.
For peace the park's hid pathways,
For life a swaying 'bus—
In one swift moment's backward thought,
Our London comes to us.

And because we are interwoven
In the fabric of many years
On the looms, which have wrought for centuries
Happiness, power, tears,
Since the days when London a hamlet
Rose by the river side;
We have found a truer meaning
In our former Empire pride.
Our feelings are not the feelings
Of those former peaceful days,
When we waved our coloured banners
And shouted clap-trap lays.

We have lived in the city of cities,
Where like stirring drums a-roll.
Or as solemn organ music
Throbs slow our Empire's soul;
And through the crowding fancies
Of the places we have known,
Somehow all invisible
That soul has touched our own,
Brushed it in passing, lightly
As seeds of thistledown fly,
Or seared to our inmost being
To burn there till we die.

So back to our fresh young countries
In all their growing pride,
Our hearts to our fresh young countries
Our service of head and hand,
And deep within us something more
For which our brothers died,
Welded and wrought within us,
Iron firm not crumbling sand;
Only the thinkers can name it,
The soul of the Motherland;
But we'll call it a memory of London,
And London will understand.

THE RETURN OF THE 13th AND 14th

In smoke, in rain of death and hell,
Blasted and battered,
Breathing the thick gas,
In agony, that yesterday they never knew could be,
They held.

The guns crashed on
While ours behind were silent,
From shattered, shallow trenches
Their rifles steady spoke—
And so from Ypres grew Vimy,
Passchendaele, Cambrai and crowning Mons
Because they held;
Four years ago this sunny April month
They held at Ypres.

Cheer them, our city's first, the men,
Who left so soon we hardly saw them go;
The men, untaught in warfare
Who yet held;
Cheer for the living few who come again,
For many fell
There where they held,
And many since.

Perhaps that gallant company beyond the skies
Can see to-day familiar city streets,
The tossing crowds,
Their comrades' faces pass,
So cheer them now,
And cheer not only living men or dead,
Nor think how one served first, and one but late,
But cheer for that which all alike hold dear,
The pride, the honour of the regiment.

Then there are throats so choked with grief to-day
They must be silent.
Cheer loud for those who cannot speak,
But only raise the hand in proud salute;
Cheer till your voices pierce dividing skies
And bring together all in one again.
Then when the march is past,
Be silent, pause,
Thank God they held.

THE SPIRITS OF THE LAKE

I.

There's sunset on the waters
The mountains darkening scowl,
There's glory up and down the lake
From Orford back to Owl,
And as the twilight gathers
A stillness holds the air
As if the boys who loved the lake
In spirit hovered there.

Sometimes in early morning
When mists are all around
Comes ghostly on the listening ear
A paddle's dripping sound;
Or in the full moon's radiance
Or when the whitecaps swell,
It seems the soldier spirits seek
The lake they loved so well.

When Memphremagog dances
Alight in noon-day's blaze
Across her sun-split waters flit
The lads of former days;
Or from the cool green woodlands
Which grow along the shore
Their voices haunt from tree to tree
The lake they know no more.

There's glory in the sunlight,
There's glory in the wind,
And when the gale rides fiercest
Their spirits sweep behind.
Their glory is upon us
And we were we but wise,
Could better catch the brightness
They bring from Paradise.

THE SPIRITS OF THE LAKE

II.

Where the sun touched water shivers
Into silver on the blue,
Where the night is purple beauty
And the dawn brings wonder new,
Where your own lake shines around us
Rippled by the summer air,
You are with us
You are with us,
You who died to keep this fair.

Where the cedar scented sweetness
From Gibraltar's high rock steals
As the idler drifts beneath it
And the cooling shadow feels,
And the afternoon is stillness
Stirring not the lightest breath,
You are with us,
You who dying
Kept this precious in your death.

Round the lake we sailed and paddled
Fished together in deep bays,
Where the circling mountains heat-veiled
Shroud them in a greyish haze,
Where the hills cry out to Heaven
And the waters sing His praise,
All this wonder, all this beauty
Shall stand in the world to be;
You, for countless other children
By your dying
Kept it free.



